

The Invariance of Marxism

**International Communist
Party**

General Meeting of the Party, Milan, Sept. 1952

I - The Historical “Invariance” of Marxism

1. - The expression “Marxism” is used not to designate a doctrine discovered by the individual Karl Marx, but to refer to the theory that emerged alongside the modern industrial proletariat and “accompanies” it throughout the social revolution. We retain the expression “Marxism” in spite of the speculation and abusive exploitation to which it has been subjected by a whole series of counterrevolutionary movements.

2. - Marxism, in its only valid definition, has three major groups of opponents today. First group: the bourgeoisie, which claims that the capitalist, mercantile form of economy is definitive and denies that it can be superseded by the socialist mode of production. This group therefore—quite consistently—rejects the entire doctrine of economic determinism and the class struggle. Second group: Stalinist (and post-Stalinist) ostensible communists who claim to accept the Marxist doctrine of history and economics, but advance and defend, even in developed capitalist countries, demands that are not revolutionary, but which are identical to or even worse than traditional reformism in the fields of politics (democracy) and economics (populist progressivism). Third group: avowed disciples of the revolutionary doctrine and method who attribute the fact that the majority of the proletariat has now abandoned them to original omissions or defects in the theory, which consequently has to be corrected and modernized. Deniers, falsifiers and modernizers: we combat all three, and we believe the third group is the most pernicious today.

3. - The history of the Marxist Left, radical Marxism—more precisely, *Marxism*—is a series of struggles against all the “waves” of revisionism that have attacked various aspects of the theory and method since their first organic, monolithic expression in the *Manifesto* of 1848. In other texts we have recalled the history of these struggles in the three Internationals: against utopians, workerists, libertarians, social-democrats, reformists and gradualists, left or right syndicalists, social-patriots and, today, national-communists or people’s communists. This struggle extends over four generations and, in each phase, it is associated not with series of names, but with a well-defined, compact *school* and, in the historical sense, with a definite *party*.

4. - This long and difficult struggle would lose its link to the future resurgence if, instead of drawing the lesson of the “invariance” of Marxism, we were to accept the banal idea that Marxism undergoes a “continual historical development”, changing with the course of events and their outcome. This is the invariable justification for all the betrayals we have experienced in history, and for all the defeats the revolution has suffered.

5. - When materialists deny that a theoretical “system” born at a given moment (or worse, emerging from the mind and expounded in the work of a single human being, a thinker or historical leader, or both at the same time) could embrace the entire course of future human history and establish its rules and principles once and for all, this does not mean that systems of principles that are stable and valid for a very long period of history cannot exist.

In fact, the stability of such principles and their resistance to attempts to demolish or “improve” them is a primary source of strength for the “social class” to which they belong and whose historical task and interests they express. Rather

than to the appearance of brilliant individuals, this sequence of systems and corpora of doctrine and praxis must be related to the succession of “modes of production”, i.e. types of material organization of the life of human collectivities.

6. - Although it recognizes the formal content of the doctrines of all the major periods of history as being obviously partial and erroneous, dialectical materialism by no means denies that they were necessary in their time. Nor does it imagine that their errors could have been avoided by better reasoning on the part of thinkers and legislators, and that they could have been *detected* sooner and corrected. Each system possesses an explanation and justification in its own cycle, and the most significant systems are the ones that have remained unchanged throughout a long period of struggle and retained their organic integrity.

7. - According to Marxism, there is no continuous, gradual progress in history, especially as regards the organization of productive resources. History is instead a series of periodic leaps forward that completely and profoundly overthrow the entire economic and social apparatus. There are veritable cataclysms, catastrophes, sudden crises in which everything is transformed within a short time after remaining static for a very long period; cataclysms such as occur in the world of physics, in the stars and galaxies, in geology and even in the phylogenetics of living organisms.

8. - Since class ideologies are superstructures of modes of production, they are not formed from a daily accretion of atoms of knowledge. Instead, they appear in the breaches opened by violent shocks and guide the classes from which they emanate in a monolithic and overall stable form through a long series of struggles and movements until the next critical phase, the next historical revolution.

9. – The doctrines of capitalism, while justifying the social revolutions of the past, assert that, beginning with the bourgeois revolution, history would advance by gradual stages and without new social catastrophes, and that ideological systems would progressively absorb the successive conquests of pure and applied science. Marxism demonstrates the falseness of this vision of the future.

10. – Marxism itself is not a doctrine that can be shaped and reshaped each day with new contributions in a veritable patching and mending process: it is still one (although the last) of those doctrines that are the weapons of ruled and exploited classes called upon to overthrow existing social relations and which, in the course of their struggles, are subjected to the conservative influence of traditional forms and ideologies characteristic of enemy classes.

11. – Even if it is possible as of today—or at least since the proletariat appeared on the stage of history—to envision the history of a future classless society, a society without revolutions, it must be stated that during the very long period leading up to it, the revolutionary class will not be able to accomplish its task unless it acts throughout its monumental struggle in accordance with a doctrine and method that remain stable and are codified in a monolithic program, though naturally the number of militants and the outcome of social conflicts in different phases will vary considerably.

12. – The theoretical heritage of the revolutionary working class is no revelation, myth or idealist ideology, as was the case for previous classes. It is a positive “science”, and requires a stable formulation of its principles and rules of action, which play the same role and have the same decisive effect as past dogmas, catechisms, tables, constitutions and guidebooks, such as the Vedas, the

Talmud, the Bible, the Koran or the Declaration of the Rights of Man. But the serious mistakes of substance or form contained within these documents have not detracted from their immense organizational and social force—first revolutionary, then counterrevolutionary, in a dialectical sequence—and often precisely these “defects” have made the greatest contribution.

13. - Because Marxism denies that a quest for “absolute truth” could have any meaning, and sees doctrine not as a gift of the eternal spirit or abstract reason, but as an “instrument” of work and a “weapon” of combat, it postulates that this instrument or weapon should not be abandoned “for repairs” in the midst of an operation or at the height of the battle. Victory is secured by having good tools and weapons from the very start, in peace as well as in war.

14. - A new doctrine does not appear at any moment in history. There are certain characteristic - but very rare—epochs of history when a doctrine may appear like a dazzling beam of light, and if the crucial moment has not been recognized and the light fantastic contained, there is no use resorting to the candle ends with which the university pedant or the faithless fighter attempt to illuminate their way.

15. - For the modern proletarian class, formed in the first countries that underwent large-scale capitalist industrial development, the darkness was dispersed just before the end of the last century. At that time, the integral doctrine in which we believe—in which we must believe—was provided with all the conditions it required to take shape and describe a phase of history which would verify and confirm it after a series of momentous struggles. Either the position will remain valid or the doctrine will be acknowledged as false,

and consequently the Marxist assertion that the proletariat emerges as a new class with its own revolutionary character, program and function in history will be proclaimed null and void. Anyone who undertakes to replace essential parts, theses or clauses of the Marxist “corpus”, which has been our heritage for over a century, compromises its strength more than those who deny it openly and pronounce it to be bankrupt.

16. - After the “explosive” period in which the immediacy of the new demands had clarified and delimited them better, there followed a period in which class “consciousness”, instead of being improved and heightened, regressed and degenerated as a result of the stabilization of the world situation. As the history of Marxism has shown, the theory returns during periods when the struggle becomes intensified, with remarkable references to its origins and its initial monumental expression: witness the Paris Commune, the Bolshevik Revolution and the class movements after the first world war in Western Europe.

17. - The principle of the historical invariance of doctrines that reflect the tasks of different historical classes, and of momentous returns to original formulations, applies to all major periods in history and stands opposed to the futile hypothesis that each generation, each season in intellectual fashion is superior to the previous one, just as it opposes the stupid cliché` that human progress is an uninterrupted stream, and other bourgeois fads from which few people who call themselves Marxists today are able to distance themselves.

18. - All the myths express this principle of invariance, especially those involving demigods or prophets who have had an audience with the supreme being. It would be quite foolish to laugh at such representations; but only Marxism

has been able to uncover their real material foundations. Rama, Moses, Christ, Mohammed and all the prophets and heroes who inaugurate the epic histories of different peoples are so many expressions of this reality, which corresponds to an enormous leap in the “mode of production”. In the pagan myth, wisdom (Minerva) emerges from the head of Jupiter not in response to immense volumes dictated to energyless scribes, but as a result of a hammer-blow from the worker-god, Vulcan, who was summoned to calm a persistent migraine for the father of the gods.

At the other end of the scale of history, in the Age of Enlightenment, in opposition to the new goddess, Reason, Gracchus Babeuf, though perhaps crude in his theoretical presentation, stands up like a giant to state that physical and material strength are of greater value than reason and knowledge.

19. – There are many examples of disciples who fought to restore a doctrine against a revisionist degeneration: the Gracchi against J. Brutus, Francis of Assisi against Christ when Christianity, born for the social redemption of the humble, lounged in the courts of Medieval lords, as would later occur in the case of the precursors of something that has yet to come about against revolutionaries who had denied the heroic phase of previous classes: the battles of 1831 in France, and 1848, 1849 and innumerable other phases throughout Europe.

20. – We state that all the recent events in history are so many uncontestable and total confirmations of Marxist theory and its predictions. In particular, we refer to points which have (once again) caused major defections from class positions and plagued even those who consider Stalinism utterly opportunist. These points are, on the one hand, the

advent of centralized, totalitarian forms of capitalism, in terms of both economy and politics (regulated economy, state capitalism, unconcealed bourgeois dictatorships), and on the other, the social and political development of Russia and Asia. For us, these confirm both our theory and the monolithic form in which it was born at a specific crucial epoch.

21. - Anyone who was able to find a conflict between the great events of our time and Marxist theory would thereby succeed in proving the theory incorrect and completely discredited, and conclude that any attempt to deduce the general course of history from economic relations is in vain. At the same time, he would succeed in proving that events in any phase necessitate new deductions, explanations and theories, and consequently lead to new and different methods of action.

22. - In the face of momentary difficulties, it would be illusory to seek a solution by admitting the possibility that the fundamental theory could be changed continuously and stating that now is the time to work out new chapters in order, through this act of thought, to reverse this unfavorable situation. Moreover, it is an aberration that this task should be undertaken by groups with only a few members and, worse yet, accomplished by means of a free discussion that, on a Lilliputian scale merely apes bourgeois parliamentarism and the infamous confrontation of individual opinions—which would be an old stupidity rather than a new recipe.

23. - We are currently in the depths of a supreme depression in the curve of revolutionary potential: a time like this is anything but propitious for the birth of original theories of history. In such a period, when the prospects of an imminent large-scale social movement are nil, the

political disintegration of the world proletarian class is a logical result of the situation. But it is also logical that small groups should maintain the historical continuity of the revolutionary movement suspended like a great arc between two social revolutions. Yet it is essential that these groups not seek to alter the original content, and that they remain firmly attached to the traditional formulations of Marxism.

24. – Criticism and doubt of all the old, established positions were decisive elements in the modern bourgeois revolution which, in gigantic waves, mounted its assault on the natural sciences, the social order and political and military power, and later, with much less iconoclastic verve, focussed on the sciences of human society and history. This was the essential result of an epoch of profound upheaval lying between the feudal, landowning Middle Ages and the industrial, capitalist modern era. Criticism was the effect, and not the motor, of this immense, complex struggle.

25. – Doubt and control of individual consciousness are the expression of bourgeois reform against the compact tradition and authority of the Christian church. They were expressed in the most hypocritical puritanism which sanctioned and protected the new class rule and the new form in which the masses were enslaved under the banner of bourgeois conformity to religious morality or individual rights. The proletarian revolution takes an utterly different path: individual consciousness is nothing, and a homogeneous leadership of collective action is everything.

26. – When Marx, in his famous Theses on Feuerbach, stated that philosophers had only interpreted the world, but the point was to change it, he did not mean that the will to change conditioned the fact of change. He meant that change came first, determined by the clash of mass forces,

followed by a critical consciousness of the transformation in individuals. The latter therefore do not act as a result of their individual decisions, but under the influence of factors that precede science and consciousness.

The transition from the weapon of criticism to the criticism of weapons displaces this process from the thinking subject to the militant mass: its weapons are not only its guns and cannons, but especially the very real weapon constituted by the uniform, monolithic, constant, collective party doctrine, to which we are all subject and bound, leaving behind once and for all the debates of gossip-mongers and pedants.

II - The False Resource of Activism

1. - There is a current objection—by no means original, since it has already surfaced in the worst episodes of the workers' movement—that consists in underestimating the clarity and continuity of our principles and seeking to “be political”, to plunge into the activity of the movement, which would itself indicate what path to follow, and in not pausing to study our texts in order to draw the lessons of past experience before making decisions, and instead forging ahead blindly in the thick of the action.

2. - This practical activism is yet another deformation of Marxism, either because it seeks to give priority to the decisiveness and vigor of leadership and vanguard groups without substantial theoretical scruples, or because it reduces everything to the decision or a consultation of “the class” and its majorities on the pretext of choosing the path most workers prefer, impelled by economic interest. These are old tricks, and no traitor who has sold out to the ruling class has ever left the party without claiming first that he was the best and most active “practical” defender of the workers' interests, and second, that his actions were sanctioned by the manifest will of the mass of his partisans...or electors.

3. - The revisionist deviation (e.g. Bernstein's reformist, legalitarian evolutionism) was fundamentally activist, not ultra-determinist. It did not merely consist in replacing the revolutionary goal, deemed too high, with limited demands the situation brought within reach, but in closing one's eyes to the burning vision of the complete trajectory of history. It

reasoned: the immediate result is everything, so let us set ourselves immediate, limited goals, not on the universal scale, but on the local, transitory one, and we will be able to shape the results by our will. The Sorelian syndicalists, who advocated violence, said the same thing, and came to the same end: the former concentrated on obtaining legal concessions through parliament, and the latter on winning sectorial victories in the factory. Both turned their backs on the historical tasks.

4. - These forms of “eclecticism”—a deviation which consists in claiming the freedom to change the battlefield and alter the doctrine—began, like all others, with a falsification: they claimed that this continuous self-correction (or rather, changing of course) derived from the attitude and writings of Marx and Engels. In all our work, with the help of quotes and detailed studies, we have revealed the continuity of the Marxist line, noting that their later texts are intimately connected with passages and fundamental theories in their first works, with the same expressions and the same scope.

5. - Hence the emptiness of the legend that attributes two different, successive “spirits” to Marx: the young Marx was presumably idealistic, voluntaristic, Hegelian and, under the influence of the last tremors of bourgeois revolutions, insurrectionary and ready to leap on the barricades; whereas the mature Marx is alleged to have occupied himself with a cold study of contemporary economic phenomena and to have become positivist, evolutionist and legalitarian. This is just one recurring deviation in the long series that we have analyzed, and it may appear as extremist or moderate. Unable to grasp the revolutionary tension of dialectical materialism, this deviation leads to another, equally bourgeois, deviation which, idealist and individualist in nature, gives priority to the role of

“consciousness”: futile and contingent practical activity in the short run; passivity, or rather irremediable revolutionary impotence on the historical scale.

6. – We need only recall that the conclusion of the first volume of *Capital*, which describes the expropriation of the expropriators, is—as is indicated in a note—nothing other than a repetition of the corresponding passage in the *Manifesto*. The economic theories in the second and third volumes are only a development of the theory of value and surplus value expounded in the first. The expressions and formulations are the same, as are the symbols (Antonio Graziadei tried in vain to break apart this unity). Any attempt to separate the analytic part of the description of capitalism from the programmatic part, which defines the conquest of socialism, would be a fiction. None of the deviations has ever understood the strength of the Marxist critique of utopianism, or of the critique of democratism. It is not sufficient to imagine a goal and content oneself with dreaming about it or despairing because the pretty colors of the dream do not inspire people to make it come true. The problem is to identify a goal that can be solidly and physically achieved, and to aim straight for it, aware that people’s blindness and lack of consciousness will not prevent it from being attained.

7. – Marx’s fundamental achievement was to establish the connection (sensed by the best of the utopians) between the distant conquest and the immediate physical movement of a class in struggle: the modern proletariat. But this is not sufficient for an understanding of the complete dynamic of the class revolution. Anyone familiar with the overall construction of Marx’s work, which he was not able to finish, can see that he intended to summarize the whole with a study of the problem of the impersonal character of the class and its activity, which was already explicit in his

thought and writings. The only way to encapsulate the entire economic and social construction of Marxism in accordance with the method that forms its foundation is by means of discussion of this question.

8. - It would be quite insufficient to say that Marxist determinism eliminates the quality and theoretical or practical activity of exceptional individuals as the motive force of history (as usual, one should not confuse motive force and direct agent), and replaces them with classes, understood as statistical collectivities of individuals, merely by shifting the factor of ideas (consciousness and will) from the individual to the mass. This would imply no more than a passage from an aristocratic philosophy to a democratic, populist philosophy, which in fact is just as alien to us as the former. Instead, Marxism inverts the cause-effect relationship completely, placing the cause not in ideas (consciousness), but in physical, material facts.

9. - The Marxist thesis states in particular that it is not possible for an individual brain to encompass a consciousness of the entire course of history in advance, for two reasons. First of all, because consciousness does not precede, but follows *being*, i.e. the material conditions that surround the subject of this consciousness; and secondly because all forms of social consciousness emerge—with a certain lag that enables a general determination of this consciousness—from the analogous, parallel circumstances, i.e. economic relations, in which the individuals who (thereby) constitute a social class are placed. These individuals are forced to “act together” historically long before they can “think together”. The theory that defines this relationship between class conditions and class action and its ultimate goal has nothing in common with a revealed doctrine proclaimed by individuals, i.e. by a specific author or leader, or by the “whole class” conceived of as the

aggregate, momentary sum of a number of individuals in a given country or at a given moment: and it most definitely cannot be deduced from a very bourgeois “consultation” within the class.

10. - For us, the dictatorship of the proletariat is not a consultative democracy transplanted into the proletariat; it is the organized force which, followed at a given moment by part of the proletariat, not necessarily the majority, expresses the material pressure that overthrows the bourgeois mode of production to open the way for the new communist mode of production.

One factor in this process, whose importance is not negligible, is repeatedly pointed out by Marx: the deserters of the ruling class who go over to the revolutionary camp. They counteract the action of whole masses of proletarians which, because of their material and ideological subjugation, are subservient to the bourgeoisie and almost always represent the statistical majority of the class.

11. - The balance sheet drawn by our current of the revolution in Russia does not suggest that its liabilities should be attributed to a violation of internal class democracy, or that we should doubt the Marxist and Leninist theory of the dictatorship, which is judged, not according to constitutional or organizational criteria and limits, but only by the historical relationship of forces .

Rather, the complete abandonment of the terrain of class dictatorship is precisely demonstrated by Stalinism’s complete inversion of the revolutionary method. No less than all the others, the former Communists everywhere pass over into the camp of democracy, by standing on the terrain of popular and national democracy. In Russia, no less than outside it, their entire policy is one of abandoning class

aims for national aims; even if we adopt the usual vulgar description of this policy as purely and simply the state's espionage network abroad. Those who attempt to take the democratic road are embarking on the road to capitalism; and that includes the waves of anti-Stalinists who clamour indignantly about the suppression of proletarian "opinion" in Russia.

12. – We could cite innumerable passages from Marx which demonstrate the impersonal factor of historical events; otherwise it would be impossible to advance a materialist theory of history.

We know that only the first volume of his great work *Capital* was completely assembled and edited by Marx. In his letters and prefaces Engels would recall the difficulties he encountered in preparing the second and third volumes (not to mention the fourth, which is a history of bourgeois economic theories) for publication.

Engels even had doubts as to the order of the chapters and sections of the two books, which study the process of capitalist production as a whole, not in order to "describe" the capitalism of Marx's time, but to show that, whatever may happen, the general process advances not toward an equilibrium or a "state of normalcy" (like a river whose waters neither swell nor subside), but toward a series of increasingly acute crises and a revolutionary collapse of the "general form" under investigation.

13. – As he indicated in his 1859 preface to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the first draft of *Capital*, after discussing the three fundamental classes of modern society—landowners, capitalists and proletarians—Marx intended to examine three other questions: "The state, international trade and the world market". The question of

the “state” is dealt with in the text on the 1871 Commune, in Engels’ classic chapters and, naturally, in Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, the question of “international trade” is dealt with in Lenin’s *Imperialism*. The work is that of an entire historical school, not one person’s “complete works”. The question of the “world market” is today written in letters of fire in the book of facts, that nobody is able to decipher, there is even a brief reference to it in the stupid theory of the double market advanced by Stalin shortly before his death; it would nonetheless reveal the embers of the fire which will consume world capitalism in the second half of the century if those who study it did not concern themselves so much with Country and Nation and did not pursue the decrepit chimeras of the bourgeois epoch: Peace, Freedom, Independence, the sacredness of the individual and the constitutionality of government decisions!...

14. After explaining how the social product is divided among the three basic classes to form national income as rent, profit and wages, and after showing that the transfer of rent to the state would not change the capitalist structure of the economy and that even the transfer of the total surplus-value to the state would not transcend the boundaries of the capitalist form of production (since the squandering of living labor, i.e. the intensity and length of the working day, would stay the same, while the division into enterprises and the mercantile character of the system would remain unchanged), Marx concludes the strictly economic part as follows: “The second distinctive feature of the capitalist mode of production is the production of surplus-value as the direct aim and determining motive of production. Capital produces essentially capital, and does so only to the extent that it produces surplus-value.” (Only communism will be able to produce a surplus *that is not* capital.)

The determining factor is thus by no means the existence of the capitalist, or the capitalist class, which are not only just effects, but unnecessary effects as well.

“Whereas, on the basis of capitalist production, the mass of direct producers is confronted by the social character of their production in the form of strictly regulating authority and a social mechanism of the labour process organized as a complete hierarchy (i.e. bureaucratized!) this authority reaching its bearers, however, only as the personification of the conditions of labour in contrast to labour, and not *as political and theocratic rulers* as under earlier modes of production—among the bearers of this authority, the capitalists themselves, who confront one another only as commodity owners, there reigns complete anarchy within which the social interrelations of production assert themselves only as an *overwhelming natural law* in relation to *individual free will*.”

It is therefore necessary, and sufficient, to hold to the monumental invariance of the original text in order to reject all the false modernizers who have, in reality, plunged into the depths of the most vulgar bourgeois prejudice, which consists in seeking the cause of all social inferiority in “free will” or, worse yet, in the “collective responsibility of a social class”. After *Capital* everything was quite clear: the capitalist, or the capitalist class, could easily cease here or there to “personify” capital, which would nonetheless remain opposed to society as a “social mechanism”, an “overwhelming natural law” of the productive process.

15. – Such is the monumental Chapter 51, which closes the “description” of the modern economy, and on each page “evokes” the spectre of the revolution. We then come to Chapter 52, which amounts to little more than a page. Under the point at which the last sentence is interrupted,

Engels' tired hand wrote, in brackets: "Here the manuscript breaks off...".

Its title: "Classes". We are at the threshold of the inversion of praxis, and, having eliminated free will, we seek the agent of the revolution.

In essence, the chapter says this: we have given the laws of pure capitalist society, with its three classes. But this doesn't exist even in England (even in 1953 it doesn't exist there or elsewhere, and it will never exist, any more than the two material points endowed with mass to which Newton's laws reduce the cosmos).

"The first question to be answered is this: What constitutes a class? *At first glance*—the identity of revenues and sources of revenue. However, *from this standpoint*, physicians and officials, e.g., would also constitute two social classes, for they belong to two distinct social groups, the members of each of these groups receiving their revenue from one and the same source. The same would also be true of the infinite fragmentation of interest and rank into which the division of social labour splits laborers as well as capitalists and landlords—the latter, e.g., into owners of vineyards, farm owners, owners of forests, mine owners, and owners of fisheries..."

The sentence and the thought are interrupted here. But we have what we need.

16. – Without applying for a copyright for a single sentence, we can complete this crucial chapter cut short by the author's death, an arbitrary individual incident according to Karl Marx, who liked to quote Epicurus (about whom he had written his doctoral thesis) in this connection. As Engels

once said: "Every event conditioned by necessity bears its own consolation". No unnecessary regrets.

Classes are not defined, as it appears "at first glance", by the identity of sources of revenue.

This single sentence buries forever all past and future syndicalisms, laborisms, corporatisms, Mazzinisms and Christian socialisms.

The insipid ideologues of the spirit and the individual, of liberal society and the constitutional State, are content to recognize only the existence of collective sectoral interests, and that they cannot be ignored. But our theoretical conquest went far beyond this. The fact that it was not possible to make a face and close one's eyes to the "social question", even reduced to pills, was only a preliminary victory. It would gradually penetrate the modern world. But penetrating the world is one thing, smashing it into a thousand pieces is another.

There is no use building statistical tables to "qualitatively" select classes according to the source of their pecuniary income. It is even more stupid to select them quantitatively according to a "pyramid of income". Such a pyramid was built centuries ago; the Roman state censuses were income scales. Since centuries, simple arithmetical operations made it possible to answer the philosophers of poverty that by decapitating the pyramid and reducing it to a trapezoid with the same base they would only have founded a society of beggars.

How could this predicament be avoided, both quantitatively and qualitatively? A senior official is paid a salary, thus according to time, just like a wage-earning laborer who works in, say, a nationalized industry. But the former has a

higher income than many merchants and industrial capitalists who live off profits. And the latter has a higher income than many small peasant landowners as well as many small landlords who live off apartment rents...

A class is not defined only by economic criteria, but also by the historical position it occupies in the gigantic struggle through which a new general form of production transcends, defeats and replaces the old.

If it is stupid to claim that society is a mere sum of individuals in ideological terms, it is just as stupid to claim that the class is a mere sum of individuals in economic terms. Individual, class and society are not pure economic or ideological categories, but products (changing continuously according to place and period) of a general process of which the powerful Marxist construction reproduces the real laws.

The operative social mechanism determines and models individuals, classes and societies without “consulting” them in any way.

A class is defined by its path and historical task; and our class is defined by the fact that it quantitatively and qualitatively demands its own disappearance (and above all its own disappearance, since the disappearance of enemy classes, a process already well underway, represents almost nothing): such is the dialectical culmination of its immense effort.

Today the class as a whole is assuming without hesitation a different meaning: for the moment it is for Stalin and a capitalist state like the Russian state, for a clique of parliamentarians and candidates who, in terms of anti-

Marxism, far outdo the performances of yesterday's Turati, Bissolati, Longuet and Millerand.

17. - Therefore all that remains is *the party*, as the existing organ that defines the class, struggles for it, governs for the class in the crucial moment, and prepares the end of governments and classes. On the condition that it is not the party of Peter or Paul, that it doesn't succumb to the cult of the leader, and that it returns to defend, *with blind faith if necessary*, the invariable theory, rigid organization and method of Marxism, which is not based on sectarian a priori, but knows that in a society that has achieved its typical form (Israel in the year 0 or Europe in 1900) the battlecry "Those who are not for us are against us" applies unconditionally.

THE IMMEDIATE REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAMME

General Meeting of Forli, December 28th 1952

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The meeting of Forli (Italy) the report of which we give here took place after the separation from the “Daménist” current (Onorato Damen was the leader of this tendency) in the Partito Comunista Internazionale; it is part of a series of meetings aimed to fight against “activism”, i.e. the idea according to which, whatever activity which may lead to immediate results is much more important than theory and principle; and to lay the foundations for the patient work of theoretical and programmatic restoration of Marxism which had been completely disfigured by the counter-revolution. This restoration was needed to dispel the confusion prevailing even among the few revolutionary militants, and to restore on sound bases the core of the future class party. It was not a retreat into an ivory tower, a fall into academicism or a refusal of practical intervention in the daily struggles of the working class—accusations hurled against us at the time; our current had understood that it was necessary to devote as much energy to the work of comprehensive restoration of the theory in order to base activity on solid terrain, against all and any deviation suggested by looking for an illusory quick success. As one of our texts states: “The revolutionary class will accomplish its

task to the extent that it will act in all its immense struggle according to a stable doctrine and method, equipped with a monolithic program, regardless of the extremely variable number of militants and the success of various phases in the social turmoil.”

I - Theory and Action

1. - In the present situation, in which revolutionary energy has sunk to the lowest level, the party's practical task is to examine the historical path of the struggle. It is an error to define this study as a literary and intellectual exercise and to contrast it to one form or other of intervention in the struggle of the masses.

2. - For those who agree that the current politics of the Stalinists are totally anti-classist and anti-revolutionary and that the collapse of the Third International was more serious than that of the Second in 1914, there are two positions from which to choose: they can admit that something in the platform shared by the Italian Left, the Comintern at its beginning, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the October victors has become obsolete, or maintain, as we do, that the only obsolete positions are those that the Italian left has had to combat since that time, while all those that the Russians subsequently betrayed remain fully legitimate.

3. - Faced with the faltering of the Western revolutionary movement after World War I, the communist movement committed a grave mistake in its vain attempts to force the situation to evolve into an insurrection and dictatorship of the proletariat by resorting to democratic, legalitarian and workerist measures. This mistake which was widely practiced, supposedly at the heart of the working class, at the fringe of contact with the social traitors of the Second

International, was bound to develop into a new form of social and political collaboration with capitalist forces, both nationally and worldwide, into a new opportunism and betrayal.

4. - The influence of enemies and traitors was reinforced under the guise of strengthening the influence of the revolutionary party, with its robust theoretical and organizational basis. Instead of conquering the majority, as was dreamt, the solid historical core of the party was lost. The lesson learned is to not carry out the same maneuver nor to follow the same method. This is no small lesson.

5. - In 1946, at the end of World War II, it was futile to look for a situation as fertile as in 1918, since the counter-revolutionary degeneration was much more serious; there were no large nuclei of proletarians able to remain aloof from the war-time military, political and partisan bloc, and the policy of the victorious countries toward the conquered nations was different from 1918—they were occupied under a police regime. The situation in 1946 was clearly as unfavorable as the one that followed the great defeats of the Communist League in 1849 and the First International in 1871.

6. - A sudden return of the masses to effective organization for a revolutionary offensive is unthinkable. In these conditions the best outcome in the next few years would be the reaffirmation of the genuine proletarian communist goals and demands and the confirmation of the lesson we have learned from history: that improvising tactics for every new situation under the pretext of exploiting unexpected new facts is defeatism.

7. - Stupid actualist-activism that adapts its actions and initiatives to the immediate circumstances of the day is true

party existentialism. It must be banished to allow a bridge to be built to link the past and the future and so that the guiding principle that the party established once and for all—forbidding members and above all leaders from embarking on all the tendentious research into and discovery of “new paths”.

8. - This retrograde tendency; especially when it defames and deserts the work of doctrinal and theoretical restoration, as necessary today as it was for Lenin in 1914-18, assuming that action and struggle are everything, leads to the destruction of Marxist dialectics and determinism, substituting the immense historical research of the rare moments and crucial points in history on which the communist movement must rely, for a frenzied voluntarism which is the worst and crassest adaptation to the status quo and its miserable immediate perspectives.

9. - All the methods of these vulgar practitioners aren't new forms of an original political method: they only mimic old anti-marxist positions and idealism, in the manner of B. Croce, which states that no scientific law can predict the historical process that “is always right” in its rebellion against every rule and any forecast on the evolution of human society.

10. - Thus what must be brought to the fore is the reaffirmation, supported by our classic party texts, of the integral Marxist conception of history, of the revolutions which have taken place until today and, of the nature of those to come, whereby the proletariat will overthrow capitalism and institute new social forms. In the first place, the original positions must be set out again in all their strength, as they have existed for at least a century, thus liquidating all the banalities affirmed even by many people who are not in the Stalinist swamp, but who pass off

bourgeois and popular demands likely to assure their demagogic success—as communist.

11. – Such a task is long and difficult, occupying years and years, and on the other hand the reversal of the world relationship of forces will take decades. Stupid haste and the spirit of falsely revolutionary adventurism must be rejected and scorned, as they characterize precisely those that do not know how to hold to a revolutionary position and, as many examples from the history of deviations show, leave the correct road to pursue equivocal alleyways offering illusory immediate success.

II - Immediate Revolutionary Programme

1. – The gigantic revival of the proletarian movement after WW1, whose potency was manifested on the world scale and which organized itself into a solid party in Italy in 1921, demonstrated clearly that the urgent postulate was the seizure of political power, and that the proletariat cannot do so by legal means but only by armed insurrection, that the best opportunity arises from the military defeat of one's own country, and that the political form following victory is the dictatorship of the proletariat. Social and economic transformation occurs after, the dictatorship being the primary condition.

2. – The *Communist Manifesto* established that successive social measures that appear as possible or are implemented “despotically” differ—it will be a very long road to full communism—depending on the level of development of the productive forces in the country where the proletariat has won and the speed with which this victory extends to other countries. It indicated the measures that were appropriate

for the most advanced European countries in 1848, and emphasized that these did not constitute the whole of the socialist program, rather a number of measures that it qualified as transitional, immediate, variable and, essentially, “contradictory”.

3. - Subsequently (and this was one of the elements that drove some to claim that Marxist theory was not stable, but had to be continuously redeveloped as a function of history) many of the measures then ascribed to the proletarian revolution were undertaken by the bourgeoisie itself in various countries, such as compulsory education, the State Bank, etc...

But this doesn't entitle anyone to believe that the precise laws and predictions of Marxism regarding the transition from the capitalist mode of production to socialism and all their economic, social and political forms should be altered. It meant only that in the first post-revolutionary period—the economy of the transition to socialism, preceding the lower stage of socialism, and subsequently the final, higher stage of socialism, or full communism—had changed and become a little less difficult.

4. - Classical opportunism claimed to believe that all these measures, from the first to the last, could be applied by the bourgeois democratic state under the pressure of the proletariat or even through the legal conquest of power. But in this case, these “measures” would have been adopted in the interests of bourgeois preservation and to delay the downfall of capitalism, if they were compatible with it, and if they were incompatible, the State would never implement them.

5. - Today's opportunism, with the formula of popular and progressive democracy in the framework of constitutional

parliamentarism, fills a historical task that is different and worse still. Firstly, it deludes the proletariat into believing that some of its own measures can be integrated into the program of a multi-party State representing all classes, that is, it manifests the same defeatism as the social democrats of yesterday against the class dictatorship. Next and above all, it pushes the organized masses to fight for “popular and progressive” social measures, which are directly *opposed* to those that the proletarian power has always advocated, since 1848 and the *Manifesto*.

6. – Nothing better shows the ignominy of such an involution than a list of measures that would now be formulated for a Western capitalist country, upon the realization of the seizure of power, to replace (after a century) those of the *Manifesto*, although its most characteristic measures would still be included.

7. – These demands are as follows:

a) “Divestment of capital”; a massive reduction of the part of products composed of means of production, with the target being increased means of consumption.

b) “Increase of production costs” in order to be able to give higher wages for less work time, as long as salary, the market and money exist.

c) “Draconian reduction of the work day” to at most half or less its present length by absorbing the unemployed and those engaged in anti-social activities.

d) After a reduction of the volume of production by a plan of “under-production”, concentrating production in the most necessary areas, “authoritarian control of consumption” to fight the promotion of useless, voluptuary and harmful

goods and to abolish activities that propagate a reactionary psychology.

e) “Rapid abolition of the limits of the enterprise” with an authoritarian transfer not of personnel but of means of labor, with a view to a new consumption plan.

f) “Rapid abolition of welfare” of the monetary type to be replaced by social provisions up to an initial minimum for those who cannot work.

g) “A halt to construction” of housing and industry on the outskirts of big and even small cities as a first step towards a more uniform distribution of the population over the surface of the earth. Reduction of congestion, speed and volume of traffic by prohibiting unnecessary travel.

h) “Resolute struggle against professional specialization” and social division of labor through the abolition of careers and titles.

i) Closer to the political domain, obvious immediate measures to subordinate the school, the press, all means of communication and information, as well as all entertainment and leisure networks, to the communist State.

8. – It is not surprising that Western communist parties and their equivalents call for precisely the opposite not only in their “institutional” (i.e., legal-political) demands, but also in their “structural” (i.e., socio-economic) demands. This enables them to work in concert with the party that rules the Russian state and its satellites—a party which is horrified only by the fear of a return to medieval feudalism. The social transformation they are undertaking is from pre-capitalism to full capitalism, with the full array of purely bourgeois ideological, political, social and economic

demands this implies. The western renegades are a hundred times more loathsome than their eastern counterparts. The feudal danger is still physical and real in Asia, but no longer exists in the West, particularly the capitalist fortress across the Atlantic which, bloated with conceit, crushes the proletarians of the world under the boot of its liberal, UN-sanctioned civilization.

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